

ORAL HISTORY OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY
INTERVIEWS WITH
SAM L. BREEDEN

BY - CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER - BETTY WILLIAMS
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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APRIL 6, 1973

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

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PLACE Knoxville, Tenn.

DATE April 6, 1973

Sam L. Breeden
(Interviewee)

Charles W. Crawford
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
of the John Willard Brister Library
of Memphis State University)



THIS IS A PROJECT OF THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY." THE PLACE IS KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE AND THE DATE IS APRIL 6, 1973. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. SAM L. BREEDEN AND THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW #1

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Breeden, I suggest we start by getting some information about your background and then we will get into your experiences with the Tennessee Valley Authority. You might start with when and where you were born and give some information about your early life, your education and your work experience up until October, 1934. Then we will get into your experiences with TVA.

MR. BREEDEN: I was born December 21, 1898 near Decatur, Tennessee, Meigs County. I received my primary education in public schools at this location and I also finished high school in Meigs County High School in May 1917. I entered the University of Tennessee College of Engineering in September, 1917 and graduated from the University of Tennessee June 10, 1921 with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering.

DR. CRAWFORD: After graduation from the University of Tennessee with your engineering degree Mr. Breeden, what did



you do?

MR. BREEDEN: I started to work for the Tennessee State Highway Department. This date is June 15th, 1921. I worked continuously with the Tennessee State Highway Department until October 16, 1934 at which time I started to work for the Tennessee Valley Authority.

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe you were with the Highway Department at the same time that Neil Bass was connected with it?

MR. BREEDEN: That is correct, sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: During this work with the Tennessee Highway Department what were your duties?

MR. BREEDEN: My duties were of various natures. They were location of county and state highway and federal-aid highways and my later years with the Tennessee Highway Department was on construction of large steel and concrete bridges. The bridges that I worked on were five of the largest bridges from 1928 until 1934--bridges across the Hiwassee River, Tennessee River, Clinch River, Holston River and French Broad River. The last one that I worked on before starting with Tennessee Valley Authority was across the French Broad River between Newport, Tennessee and Morristown, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: You certainly traveled over the state. Did you not live in one place throughout this time?

MR. BREEDEN: No, I [lived] dozens of places.

DR. CRAWFORD: What changes did you notice in the state's highway system during this period?

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research. It then proceeds to a literature review, followed by a description of the methodology used in the study. The results of the study are presented in the next section, followed by a discussion of the findings and their implications. The paper concludes with a summary of the main points and a list of references.

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MR. BREEDEN: Well, the State Highway Department when I started to work in 1921, was composed of very few people. The Highway Department itself was really just starting then. At the time I left in 1934 it had grown, in spite of the Depression, into a large organization and they were doing lots of work.

DR. CRAWFORD: I suppose it wasn't established until the automobile became important in Tennessee.

MR. BREEDEN: That's right

DR. CRAWFORD: How much paved highway was in the state when you started?

MR. BREEDEN: I really don't know what the figure would be. I hesitate to say.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was not very much, I suppose?

MR. BREEDEN: No sir, it wasn't. That is correct.

DR. CRAWFORD: I suppose you were with the Highway Department when the first pavement was built all the way across the state, weren't you?

MR. BREEDEN: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did your duties remain about the same throughout this whole period?

MR. BREEDEN: That's correct. I would be located at one place usually for three to five months on a location of maybe a project that would run from ten to fifteen miles, and probably move on to a second job just like that for another five to six months.

1890	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
	May 1	Interest	1.00
	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
	May 1	Interest	1.00
	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
	May 1	Interest	1.00
	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
	May 1	Interest	1.00
	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1894	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
	May 1	Interest	1.00
	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1895	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
	May 1	Interest	1.00
	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
	Dec 1	Interest	1.00

DR. CRAWFORD: What part of the state did you like best? I know you saw a great deal of it.

MR. BREEDEN: Well, there used to be five divisions in this Tennessee Highway Department and I worked in all five of them. Of course, my great liking is East Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you first hear about the Tennessee Valley Authority?

MR. BREEDEN: Shortly before May of 1933.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was very early. How did you hear about it and what did you learn?

MR. BREEDEN: Just through the newspaper articles and that was in the Depression times and everybody, all engineers especially, were looking for a better job and in hopes of having new experiences.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, you already had a secure job at that time with the Highway Department?

MR. BREEDEN: That's correct.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you get the job with the Tennessee Valley Authority?

MR. BREEDEN: Very early after the Tennessee Valley Authority Act was passed why I got an application blank and submitted it.

I think I submitted my application blank probably in the latter part of May and the first part of June of 1933.

DR. CRAWFORD: You applied for civil engineering work with TVA?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you have a reply from them?

MR. BREEDEN: About July of 1934.

DR. CRAWFORD: What work did they offer you?

MR. BREEDEN: About July of 1934 I came to the Knoxville office and contacted certain people there and they told me at that time that the work was branching out and they thought they could make me an offer within a month or two. This was probably August of 1934. The telegram that I got offering me work was about October 4, 1934. They suggested that if I accepted the job that I would begin work with TVA on October 16, 1934.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that's what you did, isn't it?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember who the first people were you talked to at TVA?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir, I guess the first man that I contacted at TVA was former professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Tennessee. He at that time was with TVA. He was Mr. Ervin Harsh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you remember him from school days?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes, sir, I did. He also was proud to say that he remembered me. I had a short interview with him and he was the person that told me that they had examined my file and they expected to make me an offer shortly. And then there was Mr. Frank W. Webster who was later head of the Highway and Railroad Division in TVA, I had worked for him all my period of time with the Tennessee Highway Department. So I was interviewed by him and then there were several others, Mr. R.E., Jr. who was in

charge of Highway and Railroad Plans in TVA and Mr. James Moreland, who had formerly been with Tennessee Highway Department. I felt like I was among old friends with all these people there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you headquartered when you came to Knoxville?
Did you stay in the city or did you go out on the job?

MR. BREEDEN: I went right straight out on the job. I started to work, my field work, at Corinth, Mississippi, October 17, 1934.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you have to do in Knoxville before you went to Corinth?

MR. BREEDEN: Very little. They just ran me through the Personnel Department and signed a few forms and told me I was a member of TVA and ready to go to work.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you go to Corinth?

MR. BREEDEN: I went by railroad train.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did TVA help you find a place to live there, or were you on your own about that?

MR. BREEDEN: No sir, I was on my own.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the job to which you were assigned at Corinth?

MR. BREEDEN: I was on the location of an access highway into the Pickwick Dam site. Now where it took off from the main street highway was actually in Mississippi, but the access highway was about eleven miles long and it went into Tennessee at the Pickwick Dam location.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have to work with the highway department of

several states in this or with Mississippi?

MR. BREEDEN: Just Mississippi. Actually most of the contacts that were necessary were made by my superiors with the Mississippi Highway Department.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you live in Corinth through this time?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was work and cooperation easy with the Mississippi Department?

MR. BREEDEN: Very easy.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did this job last?

MR. BREEDEN: The location job of this eleven miles road was completed in about four months. I believe it was completed in early January of 1935. I personally brought all the notes of location to the Knoxville office of TVA and turned them in to Highway and Railroad Division and they proceeded to work up the plans for this job because it was a rush job-- access highways were always a rush job. I worked in this Knoxville office until about February 15 and then I started work in the Wheeler Reservoir. My location was at Athens, Alabama.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have equipment and men you needed for the work at Corinth?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: What other people did you rely on for this work? Who were the people that worked with you mostly?

MR. BREEDEN: Do you mean in the Knoxville office or on my work at the access highway?

1890	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
1890	May 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1890	Dec 31	Balance	100.00
1891	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
1891	May 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1891	Dec 31	Balance	100.00
1892	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
1892	May 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1892	Dec 31	Balance	100.00
1893	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Feb 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Mar 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Apr 1	Interest	1.00
1893	May 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Jun 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Jul 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Aug 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Sep 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Oct 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Nov 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Dec 1	Interest	1.00
1893	Dec 31	Balance	100.00

DR. CRAWFORD: Both if you please sir?

MR. BREEDEN: Well, it's been a long time and I have forgotten a number of those people, but there's George Key and James Key, Henry Kennedy and James Stewart, and Phil Allen and Frank Jones.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they people on the scene at Corinth or were they in the Knoxville office?

MR. BREEDEN: They were at Athens, Alabama at this time that I started.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was about January then of '35 when you moved from Corinth to Athens?

MR. BREEDEN: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the job that you started at Athens?

MR. BREEDEN: My job at the Wheeler Reservoir when I was located at Athens, Alabama was the construction of three bridges across the Elk River. The Elk River is a tributary to the Tennessee River and has an entrance into the Tennessee River close to the present Ferry project. The river extends up into Tennessee, but three of these bridges that I worked on were located in the state of Alabama.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you had to build them because of the Wheeler Reservoir?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had the building of Wheeler cut some of the older roads or something?

MR. BREEDEN: Oh yes. They had a number of miles of highway (county and state highway). I didn't do very much of the highway work. Most of my work was confined to these three large bridges which certainly took all my time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did you construct these bridges?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir. I was the supervising engineer on the construction of them.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your work in that part? Someone else had done the design, I suppose, and others supplied the material, and you supervised the building.

MR. BREEDEN: That is right. The bridges were designed in TVA's Knoxville office and my work did strictly field work, giving line and grade, and examining foundations, inspection as construction progressed.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they steel bridges?

MR. BREEDEN: Steel and concrete combination.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they as good as the other bridges in the Alabama area?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes. The one bridge near Rogersville, Alabama, was new--constructed new and of a very high type. The other two bridges were raised and improvements made in both of them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why were they raised?

MR. BREEDEN: They were raised to meet navigation requirements on the Elk River.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't realize that the Elk River had navigation on it.

MR. BREEDEN: In its earlier days there was quite bit of navigation on Elk River. The story that I got working there was that

1890	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Feb 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Mar 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Apr 1	Balance	100.00
1890	May 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Jun 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Jul 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Aug 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Sep 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Oct 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Nov 1	Balance	100.00
1890	Dec 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Feb 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Mar 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Apr 1	Balance	100.00
1891	May 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Jun 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Jul 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Aug 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Sep 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Oct 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Nov 1	Balance	100.00
1891	Dec 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Feb 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Mar 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Apr 1	Balance	100.00
1892	May 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Jun 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Jul 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Aug 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Sep 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Oct 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Nov 1	Balance	100.00
1892	Dec 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Jan 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Feb 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Mar 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Apr 1	Balance	100.00
1893	May 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Jun 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Jul 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Aug 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Sep 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Oct 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Nov 1	Balance	100.00
1893	Dec 1	Balance	100.00

Athens, Alabama itself was supplied by river traffic on Elk River at its nearest point which I believe was probably six or eight miles.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I knew of course, that they had navigation on the Tennessee, but I didn't know about the Elk River.

MR. BREEDEN: Yes it did have. There was no navigation on it while I was working there, but prior to that there had been.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you find work in Alabama any different from that in Mississippi?

MR. BREEDEN: No, sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: I suppose the engineering supervision was about the same anywhere you were?

MR. BREEDEN: Same thing.

DR. CRAWFORD: You worked with the Highway Department in Alabama I suppose?

MR. BREEDEN: Well, in conjunction with the Alabama Highway Department, as I stated once before, the contacts with the officials of the Alabama Highway Department were made by my superiors and my work was practically confined to the construction of these bridges.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did this work last?

MR. BREEDEN: About one year from January of 1935 until January of 1936.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did you live during this time?

MR. BREEDEN: At Athens, Alabama.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did TVA help you find housing or did you take care of that yourself?

MR. BREEDEN: I took care of that myself.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you had had a good deal of experience at it.

MR. BREEDEN: That's the truth!

DR. CRAWFORD: During this time were you becoming acquainted with other people on the TVA staff?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes. I had frequent inspections from the Knoxville office and meanwhile I believe that they had moved several of the offices to Chattanooga. I had frequent visitors in conjunction with my work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what people made these inspections?

MR. BREEDEN: From Mr. Webster on down. Mr. Webster was the head Highway Engineer. That was his title and others were Everett Scrogy, and Mr. Downey (I don't remember his given name) and James E. Moreland, Ervin Harsh and Kenneth Roberts.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is Mr. Webster still living?

MR. BREEDEN: No sir. Mr. Webster died in, probably 1961.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did this work for TVA compare with your work for Tennessee Highway Department?

MR. BREEDEN: It was exactly along the same lines and I believe that it was comparable in both respects. Both



in the Tennessee Valley Authority and Tennessee Highway Department. I think that inspection was a little bit more rigid in the Tennessee Highway Department for concrete work than the Tennessee Valley Authority. Otherwise the two were comparable.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they proceed at about the same speed? Were you able to make about the same sort of time in construction as well as the other?

MR. BREEDEN: Just about.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about your machinery and supplies? Were you as well supplied by TVA as you were by Tennessee?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir. Maybe better.

DR. CRAWFORD: How were the comparative salaries with the people who worked with you for example?

MR. BREEDEN: Well, TVA salaries were much better than with the Tennessee Highway Department. As I stated before, it had gone through the Depression and Tennessee Highway Department salaries were looked on as very low. Tennessee Valley Authority's salaries were quite a bit higher to begin with and they increased more rapidly than Tennessee Highway Department's would have, by talking with my former friends in the highway department.

DR. CRAWFORD: I don't suppose you had any difficulty getting people to work for you?

MR. BREEDEN: No, indeed. I had more applications than there were jobs.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who selected the personnel who worked for you?

MR. BREEDEN: Usually it was selected by the Personnel Department in the Knoxville [office]. I would make my request to them for needed and required personnel and they would send these people to me.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you pleased with the people they sent?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes. Usually they were high type people and qualified for the work that we anticipated for them.

DR. CRAWFORD: With what people in the Personnel Department did you work most closely?

MR. BREEDEN: It is so vague in my mind now. A Mr. Sherrill was of the Personnel Department, Mr. Richie Hume I knew, and he worked with me transmitting my requests and I don't know the names of very many of those people now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Didn't you feel that the Personnel Department understood engineering needs?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir, they sure did.

DR. CRAWFORD: About how many people were you supervising at this time?

MR. BREEDEN: At this time in Wheeler Reservoir I was supervising about 10 or 11 persons.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they were all qualified, of course?

MR. BREEDEN: They were qualified for their work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you normally have some of the same people working for you when you went from one job to another, for example, when you went from Corinth to Athens?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir, that was the rule that I would just transfer the whole party or the whole number of men that I could use on the new job. They would go more or less in a body.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did TVA have other crews or other groups doing the same kind of work that you were doing?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know how many they had?

MR. BREEDEN: No, I really don't, but they had four to six other people. There were about six people of my classification at that time doing the same work, as I recall. Each group was composed of about the same number of personnel and the same qualified personnel.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you meet the other people who were doing the same work?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had you known any of them before?

MR. BREEDEN: Very few. Of the six I had known three. I had known Mr. Crabtree, and Mr. Rush and Mr. Vesser.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were many of them from the Valley area?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir. It seemed to me like very many of them were. Of this group of six I mentioned all were

from this area of the Tennessee Valley except one person.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know TVA sometimes employed engineers from other areas of the country for some of their engineering work.

MR. BREEDEN: That is correct.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you learn much about engineers and engineering in this work, meeting other people?

MR. BREEDEN: Oh yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: When you left Athens Mr. Breeden, where did you go?

MR. BREEDEN: Back to Corinth, Mississippi.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was going on there then?

MR. BREEDEN: Well, the construction of the surveys had been made, for the relocation of the county and state roads and highways in the Pickwick Reservoir. The Pickwick Reservoir roads were in three different states and they were in Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi. But I was located at Corinth because that was more of a center of activity.

DR. CRAWFORD: What sort of roads did you build there?

MR. BREEDEN: County roads and I believe there were two sections of state highway. One in Mississippi and one in Alabama.

DR. CRAWFORD: What specifications did you follow in building these roads?

MR. BREEDEN: Well, the contracts were written by the TVA Knoxville office--I mean the specifications were written

and they were a part of the contract between TVA and the Counties and the States. They were standard specifications, so to speak, for that type of road.

DR. CRAWFORD: I suppose they tried to match the roads to the others in the county?

MR. BREEDEN: That is correct. They were looked on as comparable or improvements over the existing roads.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you think they were really improved?

MR. BREEDEN: I think they were a great improvement.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were dirt surface roads, I suppose--gravel?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: In what ways were they better when you had them improved?

MR. BREEDEN: The locations, the curves were smoother and the grades were less. We had specifications that we had no grade that would exceed over 6 per cent for the county and the state highways and then the alignment was a great improvement over the existing county roads.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did the people who lived in those areas think about your work? Were they generally pleased with it?

MR. BREEDEN: I think they were greatly pleased because they had a right to think that because it was a great improvement over the existing roads that were being replaced.

DR. CRAWFORD: How well did you get acquainted with each of these communities? I know you moved around a great deal and were in many parts of the Valley.

MR. BREEDEN: Well, I would make quite a few acquaintances with the local people. We were working out on the job, would frequently have our lunch, and stop by the grocery store and get a coke cola and we became acquainted with all these country merchants and their country stores and also people living in a community where it became handy to associate with them. We met a lot of them.

DR. CRAWFORD: You probably thus had a chance to learn what they were thinking about TVA. Generally what were they thinking about TVA?

MR. BREEDEN: It was kind of a mystery to them to begin with. They didn't know how much they were going to be damaged by the roads we were relocating and they had quite a bit of anxiety. They gave us a lot of questions that we would answer to the best of our knowledge.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you find the people in general approved of TVA?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you find that more in some areas than in others?

MR. BREEDEN: I don't believe so. I believe that it was just general that they felt like it was going to be something that was going to mean a lot to them. They were very enthused about it. I would say they cooperated where it was possible.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know how much road building you did at the Corinth area in the couple of times that you were there.

MR. BREEDEN: In the Pickwick Reservoir--now that included the roadwork in the three states--amounted to about 70 miles. Now it is the combination of the county and the state highways. We also had a highway designation as a tertiary road, we called it, which was usually on private property where some person was going to his house where his private road was damaged and we would have to correct that. But it was built to a lower standard than even the county or state highways.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were the people generally pleased for this tertiary road building you did?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have to build many of these tertiary roads?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes quite a few. I don't know how they would run in percentage as to how to total mileage involved, but probably it would be safe to say that ten percent of the mileage in a reservoir would be these tertiary roads.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were people inconvenienced very much before you built these roads or did you get them established in time?

MR. BREEDEN: They weren't damaged very much.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you replace any paved roads in this time?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir. Where a county road was paved or a

state highway was paved we replaced it with pavement. In other words it was a comparable replacement.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have all this machinery you needed yourself or did you have to contract for any?

MR. BREEDEN: No, we had it all furnished by TVA.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was your work ever inspected by members of the Board of Directors or other higher administrators?

MR. BREEDEN: No sir, I don't recall any men in capacity of the Board of Directors ever having been on the job in any of my jobs.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were the people who inspected your work generally pleased with it?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: When you left the Pickwick job, what year was it? How long did that job last?

MR. BREEDEN: That job lasted from January 1936 until I left Pickwick Reservoir in May of 1938.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you have any idea what mileage of roads you had built in that time?

MR. BREEDEN: About 70 miles.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had you lived in Corinth all that time?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you sent next?

MR. BREEDEN: To Guntersville, Alabama in the Guntersville Reservoir.

DR. CRAWFORD: About how many men were working with you at that time?

MR. BREEDEN: At the time I moved to Guntersville, my personnel had been cut down by being sent to other reservoirs. In fact, the job I went to in the Guntersville Reservoir was raising the Guntersville Bridge and it did not require the number of personnel that I had had at Corinth. I believe I had about eight men working for me at Guntersville?

MR. BREEDEN: That was a large bridge that had been built by the Alabama Highway Department in the late 1920's. The bridge was about 1800 feet long.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a large bridge. Was it a metal bridge?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes. It was concrete and steel. The main span across the river itself was about 900 feet long on a continuous steep span and over four concrete piers. My job on this bridge was it had to be raised for navigation requirements when the Guntersville Reservoir was constructed. We had to raise this bridge 17 feet to comply with minimum navigation requirements. The approaches to the bridge, in addition to this 900 foot continuous steel span, were about 900 feet long and they were composed of shorter reinforced concrete spans about 50 feet long.

DR. CRAWFORD: How much did you have to raise this bridge and why?

MR. BREEDEN: The bridge was raised about 17 feet and due to the reservoir it had interfered with minimum navigation

requirements and it was raised the 17 feet for that purpose.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you go about raising an 1800 foot bridge?

MR. BREEDEN: That was a tremendous job. That was the most interesting job that I had ever been on before or since.

The continuous steel span with its concrete floor on it weighed 1500 tons. It was raised by having 8 hugh jacks--4 of these jacks were 300 tons each and 4 of them were 150 tons each. They were all seated on the four piers and the bridge had to be raised, the specifiation called for it that it would not be more than one-eight of an inch out of level with its original seating at any one time. Each jack had two men working on it. A man stationed near the middle giving signals for the licks of the jack so that it was raised simultaneously like that and every twelve or fifteen licks they would call a halt and all points would be checked to see that it had varied more than this one-eighth of an inch in its original location.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's a very close limit.

MR. BREEDEN: That's correct.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you meet that?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir. Each point had a gage so that it read to the sixteenth of an inch so that it was easy to detect at any time when any point was out or getting out more than the specifications would allow.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did the jack work?

MR. BREEDEN: They were hydraulic jacks that worked by oil. They were an oil chamber and actually they worked by hand with a long lever and two men on each lever to operate them.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long had there been jacks like that available?

MR. BREEDEN: Well, I hesitate to say, but I suppose as far as that type of equipment it was easily made available to TVA. I don't think they owned the jacks themselves, I think they rented them. That was the only job that I had ever known of, that required that kind of equipment up to that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: You have never done anything like that before?

MR. BREEDEN: No sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: I suppose that TVA had quite a bit of bridge raising to do.

MR. BREEDEN: They certainly did. There were a number of jobs. That was the first large one, but after that a number of these state highway department bridges had to be raised to comply with navigational requirements.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did that job last?

MR. BREEDEN: It lasted from May, 1938 until the last part of the year about December 30th, 1938.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have to build the concrete piers to place the jacks on?

MR. BREEDEN: No sir. They were the old existing piers.

The approach spans had to have some work done on their foundation. That was done by TVA. It was raised in the concrete.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now for raising the approaches did you just build them higher?

MR. BREEDEN: That is correct. It was a unique way of doing that
that TVA let a contract to Rust Engineering Company
of Birmingham, Alabama and they had to build equipment of their own to do
this job. The approach spans, as I mentioned before, were reinforced
concrete spans about fifty feet long and they were raised by a piece of
machinery that they call a gantry--it was a four-legged affair that straddled
the existing bridge. And these approach spans were cut loose from the
original foundation piers or bents and raised a few feet, turned through
an angle of 90°, lowered back down to the ground, rested on the ground while
the piers were raised. And then it was a reverse operation when they were
raised why these original span was picked up off the ground and just set
back up on its piers like it was a plaything.

DR. CRAWFORD: That took some large machinery, didn't it?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.





THIS IS A PROJECT OF THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY." THE PLACE IS KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE AND THE DATE IS APRIL 6, 1973. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. SAM L. BREEDEN AND THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW #2.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Breeden, I believe in our first interview we had just finished your job at Gunterville when you had the bridge raised and left that task at the end of the year 1938. Where did you go next and what did you do?

MR. BREEDEN: Beginning in January on the first of 1939 I went to the Kentucky Reservoir to make preliminary surveys on a portion of that reservoir from Waverly, Tennessee to Pickwick Dam. The purpose of these preliminary surveys was for Mr. Webster to write his report on the proposed work required in that portion of the Kentucky Reservoir.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did you stay at Kentucky Reservoir?

MR. BREEDEN: Six months. I left that area down there on July 1, 1939.

DR. CRAWFORD: What had been involved in your work at Kentucky Reservoir when you were there?



MR. BREEDEN: It was principally the running of profiles of sections of road that were to be affected by the Pickwick Reservoir and a proposal as to the relocation and making of an estimate for the cost of the construction. Now my part was purely the engineering field work--to run the profile and plot it and give it to Mr. Webster for his final analysis and indicating the new location and the extent of the location.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you do a good deal of surveying in that work?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir. We ran--right now I can't recall the number of miles--but Kentucky Reservoir had about 200 miles of relocated highways of all classes and I guess my portion for this preliminary work I imagine involved between eighty and a hundred miles of just ordinary profile work.

DR. CRAWFORD: What size party did you have working with you?

MR. BREEDEN: I had just a ordinary field survey party--I believe I had five men.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did you stay? Did you live in the area?

MR. BREEDEN: From January 1, 1939 until April 1, I lived at Waverly, Tennessee and from April 1, until June 30th I lived at Savannah, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have a TVA car or truck?

MR. BREEDEN: I had all TVA equipment--cars and engineering



equipment.

DR. CRAWFORD: This was spring and summer, I suppose you generally had good weather for working?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you scheduled to complete this work by July?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes, the work was scheduled to be completed by that time and we came out even.

DR. CRAWFORD: When were they due to start work on Kentucky Dam?

MR. BREEDEN: I hesitate to give a date for it because over the long period of time I am not too sure that the access road had not already been made into Kentucky Dam by another engineering party and they were probably working on the construction of that access road at this time.

DR. CRAWFORD: When you left that work where did you go?

MR. BREEDEN: To Rockwood, Tennessee, to work on Watts Bar Reservoir.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that would have been in July 1, 1939.

MR. BREEDEN: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: You certainly didn't lose any time. You seem to go directly to one job to the next.

MR. BREEDEN: That's correct.

DR. CRAWFORD: In Rockwood, you found a place to live, I



suppose, and then started the job.

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your work there?

MR. BREEDEN: The work in Watts Bar Reservoir was comparable to work in Pickwick Reservoir. The mileage in Watts Bar Reservoir--my part of it--was probably 30 to 40 miles of location of county and state highways and tertiary highways. We were so far behind in our getting started with the road work in this reservoir. There was Mr. Crabtree, Willard Crabtree, who was the same classification that I was. He had already been at work there a little while when I started, and I imagine his portion of the mileage was about the same as mine. There was lots of highway mileage and roadway work to get done in Watts Bar Reservoir.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you were working again in cooperation with the Tennessee Highway Department?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir, that is correct.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you know many of the people still with the department?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir. Yes, I knew a number of them.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did that project last--Watts Bar?

MR. BREEDEN: My work in Watts Bar Reservoir was from July 1, 1939 until January , 1941. At that time I was moved from the Watts Bar Reservoir to the Cherokee Reservoir.

DR. CRAWFORD: What month in '41 sir?



MR. BREEDEN: January of '41. My work that had been assigned to me in Watts Bar Reservoir was not complete, but a Mr. R. P. Holly was put in my place to supervise the remaining part of the work and I was transferred to Cherokee Reservoir principally on three large bridges there across the Holston River.

DR. CRAWFORD: What work did you do with them.

MR. BREEDEN: We constructed the bridge between Newport and Morristown in a new location and one across German Creek embayment, which is a part of our Cherokee Reservoir, and a new bridge across that area. Another known as a Melinda Ferry Bridge was dismantled and moved to a new location and then reerected.

DR. CRAWFORD: By that time you had a good deal of experience in relocating bridges.

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir, I sure had.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was TVA generally getting more experienced in what it was doing, by that time?

MR. BREEDEN: About the only way I can describe that is after so much work had been done, there was no really new type of work. There was just more or less doing the same thing over at a new location.

DR. CRAWFORD: You didn't have any special problems at Cherokee?

MR. BREEDEN: No, no special problems.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have about the same group of men working with you that you had before?



MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir, I believe that our personnel in Cherokee Reservoir--or what I called my personnel--amounted to about 30 men at this time. I might drop back and say when I was working in Watts Bar Reservoir I had about 40 men and that included all my engineering personnel plus inspectors.

D.R CRAWFORD: Of that forty men, how would they be classified?

MR. BREEDEN: Instrument men, rodmen, chainmen and axmen, are the usual designation of those survey parties, and the total party would usually consist of five men. In Watts Bar Reservoir I had about one time six parties of five men each which would be about 30 men each and then about 5 or 6 inspectors, because some of the construction would be going along at the same time the location work was.

DR. CRAWFORD: The size of your group had been increasing, hadn't it?

MR. BREEDEN: I beg your pardon?

DR. CRAWFORD: The size of your group has been increasing, hadn't it?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, how long did the work at Cherokee last.

MR. BREEDEN: Part of the work in Cherokee lasted until about February of 1942.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was the work still continuing at that time?



MR. BREEDEN: The roadway work was running way behind the bridge work at that time. And other engineering parties were doing the roadway location and construction in the latter part of the time I worked in the Cherokee Reservoir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why was the roadwork running behind?

MR. BREEDEN: Just because it was so much mileage involved and the war was coming on and people were leaving for the armed services.

DR. CRAWFORD: When you left there in February of 1942 where did you go?

MR. BREEDEN: I had been stationed at Morristown during the construction at Cherokee Reservoir and it was at that time that Douglas Dam was started so I still remained at Morristown for the time that I worked at Douglas Reservoir which was up to the time of May. I was called to the armed services in May of 1942. My work had been completed in Cherokee Reservoir and it was just beginning at Douglas.

MR. BREEDEN: Was it the same kind of work at Douglas.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you surprised to be called into the army?

MR. BREEDEN: I really was. I was 43 years old and I had a reserve commission. Everybody had kidded me and I thought myself I was too old to be in the army or to be in the armed services. I found out differently. (Laughter)



DR. CRAWFORD: They must have needed people with engineering experience!

MR. BREEDEN: Well, strange to say, my reserve commission was in the Corps of Engineers but when I was called to the Armed Services I was put in the Ordnance Department doing just deals with firearms and the like.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, what happened in your military experience? What training did you go through?

MR. BREEDEN: Well, the first thing that I tried to do, when I was called on active duty, I tried to get removed from the Ordnance Department back into the Corps of Engineers, and it took me six months to accomplish that. Meanwhile, I was sent to ordnance schools to begin my training in ordnance. I was on duty at the same time with the troops in the Ordnance Department.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you stationed at that time?

MR. BREEDEN: I was called to duty at Tallahassee, Florida. I had a number of moves then in succession like I had in my engineering parties. I was only at Tallahassee a short while then moved to Wilmington, North Carolina for very short while and then back to Tampa, Florida and stationed at Drew Field.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did you stay there?

MR. BREEDEN: I stayed there one year.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your work at Drew Field?



MR. BREEDEN: Inspection of air fields that were under construction. I was a roving inspector, so to speak. I was making inspections on twelve different air fields while I was stationed there at Drew Field and they were principally in Florida.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you travel to these fields?

MR. BREEDEN: Frequently by plane. There was always somebody that was trying to keep their flying time built up and I'd grab my handbag and run down to the air depot and somebody would run out like a taxi driver and want to take me some place and I'd have no trouble whatever getting to go. I didn't care to fly any more than I had to. I usually arranged to either ride the train or bus when it was at all possible.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did this assignment at Drew Field last?

MR. BREEDEN: One year.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did you go from there?

MR. BREEDEN: I went to Alaska.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your work in Alaska and how long did you stay?

MR. BREEDEN: Well, I was in Alaska about a total of twenty-two months. You had to wait on air travel days and days sometimes. I started from Drew Field, I believe it was July 1, 1944 and on my way I had to stop at Ft. Kern, Salt Lake City, for about two or three weeks and I went on to Seattle, Washington,



and I finally wound up in Anchorage, Alaska--I don't know--in August, probably in the middle of August, 1944, and I had to wait there, oh, several days to go on out to the Aleutian Islands. I was headed for Adak Island out in the Aleutian chain.

DR. CRAWFORD: What held you up so along the way?

MR. BREEDEN: Air schedules--air travel. Everybody bumped everybody else for air travel.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your work in Alaska and how did you like it there?

MR. BREEDEN: My work in Alaska was on the. . . The Air Force was building a big base on Adak Island.

They had been working there about one year and had it well along, but my work in Alaska was out of the Post Engineers Office and my work was principally laying out all the roads and looking after the construction of these roads on this island.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you were doing the thing that you had experience with. Did you have any special problems in road building?

MR. BREEDEN: No, the only problem that I would call attention to is that of the instability of the soil there.

You did no good whatever to build a road unless you started at the same time you surveyed it--dumping rock on it. The soil was very unstable. You could walk out on the ground and stop and in ten minutes you'll start settling down and there would be one inch or more of water around your



feet. You had to keep walking on the soil and naturally that type of soil would support no travel at all. They had a specification that no road-way would be built with less than three feet of large crushed stones and boulders for a foundation.

DR. CRAWFORD: When your work there ended, where did you go?

MR. BREEDEN: I was out in the Aleutians about twenty-two months and I stayed there until March 6, 1946, and then I headed back for the states. Then I was separated from the service, I believe, on March 28, 1946 at Ft. Smith, Arkansas and back to my home, Decatur, Tennessee, for awhile.

DR. CRAWFORD: I suppose you were all ready for a vacation?

MR. BREEDEN: (laughter) Yes. I really was!

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you go back to work for TVA?

MR. BREEDEN: I started back to work for TVA on the first of May 1946.

DR. CRAWFORD: What position were you given then?

MR. BREEDEN: I was given back my same title and classification and the same type of work that I had been doing all along and was sent to South Holston Reservoir.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your title then?

MR. BREEDEN: It was Highway Engineer.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your duty at the South Holston Reservoir?



MR. BREEDEN: The same as had been in prior work in the reservoirs--location and construction of roads that had to be replaced. In the South Holston there was construction of two large bridges--two large concrete and steel bridges.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you surprised to see TVA still building?

MR. BREEDEN: No, I had kept in touch with a lot of my friends during the time I was away in service and they kept me posted, so to speak, as to what was being done. I knew in a way what was in store.

DR. CRAWFORD: So in your work for South Holston Reservoir you were doing highway relocation. Did you do any bridge work?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes, on two large bridges. One bridge had a pier 200 ft. high.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you do? Did you use a jack?

MR. BREEDEN: No, that was just construction from a foundation up.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did that work last?

MR. BREEDEN: Work in South Holston Reservoir lasted from '46 until sometime in '49.

DR. CRAWFORD: And where did you go then?

MR. BREEDEN: From South Holston (I had my headquarters in Bristol and I remained at Bristol) but by



that time they had started Boone Reservoir which is a smaller reservoir on the Holston River. And I still stayed at Bristol, but did work on the Boone Reservoir. And the duration of that was from 1949 to about 1952. That was the same kind of work. I believe that was about fifteen miles of roadway relocation and construction and three large bridges in that reservoir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you relocate the bridges?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: From Boone Reservoir where did you go?

MR. BREEDEN: For Boone Reservoir I remained at Bristol and moved on down to the Patrick Henry Reservoir which was on further down the river from Boone and the Patrick Henry Dam is near Kingsport, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did you work there?

MR. BREEDEN: The work in Patrick Henry Reservoir lasted about two years. That was from 1952 to 1954.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you still had a little time left. And what did you do for the remainder of your TVA career. (Laughter)

MR. BREEDEN: Dams were just about all built. There was no more field work so I realized at that time that since I was strictly a field man and a construction man that



my work must be limited with TVA so I was then assigned to a small construction job on Caney Fork River over in Warren County. It was a construction of a bridge across Collins River and that was done between August of 1954 and May of 1955.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did you decide to leave TVA then when that job was finished?

MR. BREEDEN: They decided that. I was terminated due to the lack of any work coming up that was parallel to my line of work. I was terminated on May 30, 1955.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you under the TVA pension plan then?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And since that time you have been living in Knoxville?

MR. BREEDEN: No, I knew that my work was fast coming to an end there with TVA so I made application back with Tennessee Highway Department in probably April 19 1955. And they gave me an immediate reply that I could start work back with the Tennessee Highway Department in the Nashville office any time that I left TVA.

DR. CRAWFORD: So that's where you went next?

MR. BREEDEN: Yes sir, I went back to the Tennessee Highway Department in Nashville starting on June 1, 1955.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did you stay there?

MR. BREEDEN: I retired on November 2.



DR. CRAWFORD: You really had two careers, but they were both very much alike.

MR. BREEDEN: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Not to mention your military service.

MR. BREEDEN: I frequently said with my forty-seven years of continuous work I had two employers-- Tennessee Highway Department, first and last, and TVA in between.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, having seen a great deal of it what do you think of the quality of TVA's road building and bridge work around the reservoirs?

MR. BREEDEN: The highest type and of the best quality.

DR. CRAWFORD: I would say they certainly had experienced and capable people working on it. Thank you very much Mr. Breeden.

MR. BREEDEN: Thank you.





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